1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



servants. Though the Bison-horn Marias are not free from either venereal disease or the visits of these gentry, yet they have been fairly successful in keeping their women to themselves, and have suffered little except in the south, where many of them go at times to Dummagudem and other Madras towns for work. If, however, the Telugus have given them venereal disease, they have more than repaid them with yaws. 164

Skin diseases, such as scabies, ringworm and eczema, are common, especially among Bison-horn Marias and Murias, who under Hindu influence are taking to the use of clothes. They cannot afford a change of clothing, and dispensary treatment is defeated at once if the old infected clothing cannot be discarded. Hill Marias wearing only scanty loin-cloths are far less affected; but even among them the 280 cases treated included 10 of scabies, 9 of ringworm and 7 of eczema. [177]

Eye complaints are frequent, owing largely, no doubt, to the habit of living and sleeping in dark unventilated huts and dormitories thick with smoke. The 280 Hill Maria cases included 16 of conjunctivitis, 5 of cataract, and 5 of other eye complaints.

Malaria is very common among the Bison-horn Marias, and in the Bijapur tahsil blackwater fever occurs. The 280 Hill Maria cases included 26 of malaria, only 4 of which were of children with badly enlarged spleens.

Old men and women are frequently seen crippled with rheumatism, and 17 of the 280 cases were of young men suffering from rheumatic complaints. Of the rest of the 280 cases, 24 were badly neglected ulcers, 6 bad foot-cracks, 25 simple stomach complaints, and 9 (including 3 of pyorrhoea) neuralgia from badly decayed teeth. No figures were kept of what is now the most obviously prevalent complaint, hydrocele, because it was impossible to treat this in camp. Glassford noted the prevalence of this in the sixties, and wrote in paragraph 66 of his Report that :—

'Hydrocele . . . is exceedingly common in the Chintalnar and Sonabore (i.e. Sukma) Talooks, and also around Dantewara and in all parts, indeed, lying adjacent to the Balia Deola range of hills. I should say that from 10 to 20 per cent. of the population in these parts are afflicted in this manner. Their own account of it is that it is caused by drinking the water of nullahs during the freshes.'

To me it now seems commoner in the Hill Maria country than elsewhere. The victims know no cure, and are only beginning to realize that something can be done for it in the dispensaries.

The idea that Marias are expert physicians is an amusing example of the general Hindu ignorance and superstitious dread of the aboriginal. In actual fact the Maria has only a few queer 757 752

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria



nostrums like the use of red-ants for fever or python-flesh for pot-belly already mentioned, and cauterization is the only treatment he knows for simple injuries or foot-crack (just as he brands the flanks of ailing cattle). A Maria bitten by a rabid dog at His Excellency Sir Montagu Butler's Christmas camp at Kondagaon in 1927 refused point blank to be sent out of Bastar to Raipur for Pasteur treatment, but ultimately as a concession to the general anxiety asked to be given the body of the dog, and ate its liver.[1] To Marias illness is generally a manifestation of something malignant, either the magic of a human enemy or the ill-will of a god or spirit. At funerals, steps are taken to ascertain whether magic was the cause of death; in illness a medium is called in, or a *wade* or *gunia* with knowledge either of spells to defeat the spirits of evil or of the white magic means of blowing away illness, *jhara phukna*, epidemic or epizootic disease may be defeated either by palisading the village after sweeping it clean, and posting guards with bows and arrows to shoot the demons of illness, as was done by Hill Marias in the great influenza epidemic of 1918, or by special disease-riddance ceremonies like the annual ceremony described on page 140. Yet such is the Hindu's faith in their 'medicine' that in 1930 the late zamindar of Sukma hastened his death when in the last stages of diabetes by taking the advice of Bison-horn Maria 'doctors' or *gunia* to the effect that he had two intestines, one of which had withered like a dead plant, while the other, though withering, was still partly green and could be revived if the patient fed it with lumps of black earth.

**Maria treatment of disease**

### *B. Manufactures*

In the preceding chapters frequent mention has been made of basketry, for Maria measures, grain bins, walls of houses and fences, dancing shields and so on. The Hill Marias are great basket workers, men and women. The men make all the big basketry bins for storing grain and the large baskets sold at the markets, as well as dancing shields and fencing and matting; the women make the basketry measures, basketry plates and the smaller domestic baskets, as well as brooms of various grasses, which are generally plaited together at the top by basketry methods. In camps, Hill Maria youths almost invariably employ any spare time in basket-making. Bison-horn Marias on the contrary leave it almost entirely to their women, except that the men make the basketry caps that are the basis of the *tallagulis* bison-horn dancing headdress, and fencing.

1 [See cat. 116, p. 421. - Awalysf]

**1. Basketry**